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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TAIWAN'S UN REFERENDUM, U.S.-TAIWAN
RELATIONS

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage November 17-19 on a Taiwan High Court verdict last Friday, which ruled in favor of DPP Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu on an appeal of the nullification of her election last December; on a Central Election Committee decision Friday to adopt "one-step voting" for the 2008 legislative elections; and on the 2008 presidential election. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" said both the referenda pushed by the DPP and the KMT on Taiwan's UN membership are moves that affirm Taiwan as an independent sovereign state and a milestone that marks a step by Taiwan to move toward a normal country. A "Liberty Times" op-ed discussed the annual report published by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission recently. The article urged Washington not to forget Taiwan's strategic importance for the United States. End summary.

12. Taiwan's UN Referendum

"The Objectives of Joining or Re-joining the UN Should Both Be To Maintain the Status of Taiwan's Independent Sovereignty"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (11/19):

"... The referenda [on Taiwan's bid] to join or re-join the UN, each endorsed by the Taiwan public, reveal the Taiwan people's determination to become a member of the international body. The core of such an idea lies in the Taiwan people's assertion of the island's status as an independent sovereign entity. Taiwan, being an independent sovereign state, is Taiwan, while China is China. The Taiwan people are by no means willing to become part of China, and the consistent spirit of the island's campaign can be seen, starting from its name change, through the writing of a new constitution, to its UN bid. In that vein, it is certainly out of the question for Taiwan to conduct a unification referendum, as requested by China. Should Taiwan hold such a referendum, it would contradict the island's status as an independent sovereign entity regardless of whether such a referendum were popularly approved or not.

"Both the ruling and opposition parties could strive for their respective referenda to join or re-join the UN, but their objectives should both be to promote Taiwan becoming a normal country. The referenda to join or re-join the UN are neither a dispute about wording nor a campaign tool for any specific political party. Instead, it is a move that affirms Taiwan as an independent sovereign state and a milestone that marks a step by Taiwan to move toward becoming a normal country."

13. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

"The U.S. Also Needs Taiwan"

Assistant Professor Cheng Ta-cheng at the National Taiwan University of Science and Technology opined in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] (11/18):

"The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission has recently released its annual report, in which it said Taiwan's national defense depends entirely on the United States and that without U.S. aid, Taiwan will not be able to defend itself against an attack by the People's Liberation Army. This report has its points, but the United States should not forget that Taiwan is also very important for U.S. strategy in the Asian-Pacific region.

"First, Taiwan plays an important role of a 'pressure point' in the 'first island chain.' If Taiwan can hold fast and resist any attacks, the United States can exert tremendous and continuous pressure on China via this 'pressure point.' Likewise, if China takes over Taiwan, it can also reversely impose its military pressure to the east of the 'first island chain' via Taiwan. As a result, for China, Taiwan is never just 'a province of the Chinese motherland' with which it must unify, but a strategic point it must break through in order to penetrate the United States's long-term plan to engage in a 'war of suffocation' in the 'first island chain.' ...

"The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission suggested that the U.S. government continue cooperation with Taiwan to promote [the island's] military modernization and joint combat capabilities. This is in the right direction, but in its report, the commission did not support [Washington's] sale of advanced weaponry, such as the F-16C/D fighter jets, to Taiwan. How then is Taiwan's military going to modernize itself? Secondly, in addition to upgrading military equipment, it also requires actual joint exercises experience between the two sides so as to be able to really enhance Taiwan's 'joint combat capabilities.' But the United States has failed to put this issue into consideration. Should any conflicts

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break out in the Taiwan Strait, can the U.S. military expect Taiwan to fight shoulder to shoulder with it? In addition, the United States is clearly aware of Taiwan's military value, but it has failed to develop a closer relationship with Taiwan in terms of military bases and garrison of troops. Probably no one has any idea how both sides are going to fight in coordination with each other during the wartime. ..."

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